

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /061 W
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R 271420Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4984
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
USMISSION USUN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CU, GY
SUBJECT: MEDIA COVERAGE OF PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO CUBA

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 1595 (B) GEORGETOWN 1597

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM RETURNED ABOUT MIDNIGHT
JULY 25 FROM HIS WEEKEND TRAVELS FOR TALKS WITH CUBA'S
CASTRO AND JAMAICA'S MANLEY. PRESS REPORTS SAY ECONOMIC
MATTERS AND THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE THREE COUNTRIES WITHIN
THE REGION AND THE WORLD WERE DISCUSSED. THOSE GOG OFFICIALS
WHO WERE LEFT HOME APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN KEPT IN THE DARK
ABOUT THE TRIP, AND RUMORS OF ITS MOTIVATION ARE RAMPANT.
ONE PREVALENT RUMOR INDICATES BURNHAM'S ANTIPATHY TOWARD
ERIC WILLIAMS MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE
TRIP. WILLS HAS CALLED CHARGE FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO
DISCUSS THE TRIP. THIS PLUS REPORTS FROM OTHER
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SOURCES SHOULD PROVIDE A FAIRLY COMPLETE PICTURE
WITH A FEW DAYS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SUDDEN DEPARTURE LAST WEEK OF PRIME MINISTER
BURNHAM AND A GROUP OF MINISTERS TO CUBA WAS ANNOUNCED
SHORTLY AFTER THE PLANE TOOK OFF AT 10 AM FRIDAY,
JULY 22. THE RETURN AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT OF JULY 25 WAS

REPORTED IN THE LATE AFTERNOON PRESS OF JULY 26 AND IN THE "CHRONICLE" JULY 27. THE "CHRONICLE" ARTICLE APPEARED UNDER THE HEADLINE "PM BACK FROM EXTREMELY USEFUL TALKS," AND APPEARED TO STRESS THE "DUALITY" OF THE VISIT, I.E., THAT HE TALKED WITH BOTH CUBAN PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO AND JAMAICAN PRIMIN MICHAEL MANLEY. FONMIN WILLIS WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THE TALKS WERE "EXTREMELY USEFUL," AND THAT ECONOMIC MATTERS AFFECTING THE THREE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, AND THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE COUNTRIES WITHIN THE REGION AND THE REST OF THE WORLD HAD BEEN DISCUSSED.

2. IN JAMAICA BURNHAM REPORTEDLY TALKED WITH FONMIN PERCIVAL PATTERSON, NATIONAL MOBILIZATION MINISTER DR. D.K. DUNCAN, MINING MINISTER DUDLEY THOMPSON, IN ADDITION TO PRIMIN MANLEY. IN CUBA THEY HAD TALKED WITH CASTRO, VICE PRESIDENT IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ, AND CUBAN FORMIN ISIDORO MALMIERCA. THE VISIT TO CUBA WAS DESCRIBED IN THE PRESS AS "NOT AN OFFICIAL" ONE.

3. SPECULATION CONCERNING THE PURPOSES OF THE TRIP HAS BEEN RAMPANT BUT NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE ANY ANSWERS. SECOND-TIER FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED INDIGNATION THAT THEY WERE INFORMED OF THE TRIP ONLY ON THE MORNING OF DEPARTURE AND APPARENTLY WERE NOT INFORMED OF ITS PURPOSES. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE GAVIN KENNARD WRYLY COMMENTED TO US CHARGE THAT THE VISIT LOOKED LIKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A WEEKEND PLEASURE JAUNT TO HIM.

4. ONE VERY PREVALENT RUMOR, WHICH WILL BE REPEATED HERE BECAUSE IT ILLUSTRATES THE DEPTH OF ANTIPATHY THAT BURNHAM HOLDS FOR PRIMIN ERIC WILLIAMS AND INDICATES THAT PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOG AND GOTT DO NOT APPEAR GOOD, WAS THAT BURNHAM'S PIQUE AT WILLIAMS TRIGGERED THE SUDDEN DECISION. ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, BURNHAM HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT WILLIAMS HAD REJECTED THE GOG'S LOAN REQUEST; THEREFORE, HE DECIDED TO MAKE ANOTHER MAJOR EFFORT TO GET THE CUBANS TO INTERCEDE WITH THE SOVIETS FOR HELP IN SURVIVING THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. EMBARRASSMENT HAD BEEN MOUNTING GOG OFFICIAL CIRCLES SINCE DETAILS OF GUYANA'S "BEGGING" HAD BEEN RELEASED TO PRESS BY GOTT. ALSO, THE DELAY IN THE ARRIVAL OF A SHIPMENT OF BUNKER FUEL FROM GOTT--WHICH LED TO BLACKOUT OF GEORGETOWN JULY 17 DUE TO LACK OF FUEL FOR GENERATORS--HAS BEEN INTERPRETED BY GUYANESE AS A DELIBERATE ACT BY WILLIAMS TO FURTHER EMBARRASS BURNHAM. CANADIAN OFFICIAL SOURCES WITH CONTACTS IN GUYANA AIRWAYS CORPORATION HAS TOLD US THAT BURNHAM GAVE INSTRUCTIONS

THAT HIS PLANE NOT TOUCH DOWN IN PORT OF SPAIN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES EVEN THOUGH THE EXTREME LIMIT OF ITS FUEL RANGE WOULD BE REACHED BY TRAVELING TO CURACAO EN ROUTE TO CUBA. A SECOND SMALL PLANE STOPPED IN TRINIDAD TO PICK UP HIS DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW AND TAKE THEM ON TO CUBA. WHILE THE MOTIVES OF THE GOTT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH GUYANA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AS INTERPRETED HERE, ANTI-TRINIDADIAN FEELINGS HAVE MOUNTED VERY HIGH IN GEORGETOWN.

5. COMMENT: PRIOR TO TALKING WITH WILLS AND OTHERS CONCERNING THE MOTIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE TRIP, WE SEE LITTLE POINT IN SPECULATING BEYOND THAT WHICH WAS DONE IN REF B.
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Message Attributes

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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Sent Date: 27-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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